

DELAWARE RE-ENTRY EDUCATION TASK FORCE
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Workgroup

May 28, 2015

9:00 a.m.

Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Administration Building #2, Conference Room #199
1825 Faulkland Rd., Wilmington, DE 19805

MEETING MINUTES

Workgroup members in attendance:

Eliza Hirst, Office of the Child Advocate

Carlton Lampkins, Colonial School District

Kit Lunger, Office of the Public Defender

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter Schools Network

The Honorable Jennifer Ranji (Chair), Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

John Sadowski on behalf of The Honorable Mark T. Murphy, Dept. of Education

Dory Zatuchni, Jewish Family Services of Delaware

Others in attendance:

Jackie Katz, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Cara Sawyer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Kelly Schaffer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (consultant)

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Overview of Education/Transition Meetings in Place for Youth in Secure Care

An overview was provided of DSCYF meetings that currently take place for youth while they are in secure care. Treatment Team and Educational Planning Team (EPT) meetings were reviewed, including invited attendees and frequency of meetings. Secretary Ranji noted that input from school districts would be essential related to their attendance at meetings and the types of information that would be helpful to receive about each student. Currently, the only staff person who attends both Treatment Team meetings and EPT meetings is the DSCYF transition specialist. Since EPT meetings are focused specifically on education it may make the most sense to keep these two meetings separate and instead have individuals that attend both meetings and share youth goals and progress with each group. The Workgroup discussed the benefit in having the treatment specialist attend both of the meetings in addition to the transition specialist, and the Department will explore this possibility. It was also acknowledged that if a student has an IEP then a different meeting is held that complies with special education requirements.

Education Transition Meetings were also reviewed. The Education Transition Meeting occurs at the school district approximately 2 weeks prior to youth being discharged from YRS. At this meeting it is often decided to which school the student will return, their start date and any required documentation or follow up items that may be needed in order for the youth to start school. The Workgroup reflected on the short turnaround time from the transition meeting to when the youth ideally begins school. This does not allow for the timely completion of follow up items, school visits or re-enrollment.

The Workgroup also discussed the dis-enrollment of youth who are in YRS care. When youth leave a district for YRS they are typically dis-enrolled. The time of year impacts if/when youth are re-enrolled. The Workgroup also discussed the type of information that is required for enrollment (e.g. birth certificate, proof of residency) and what is held in a student's cumulative file. Currently, for a student to re-enroll in school after returning from a YRS placement, certain information needs to be re-confirmed. In many cases a student's residency has changed and must be verified. Workgroup members reflected on the challenge it presents for families to have to re-enroll their child. A desire for a more streamlined mechanism for sharing enrollment documentation (e.g. birth certificate) and verification between districts was also expressed. Before the next Workgroup meeting Task Force members will explore with the Department of Education what might be possible for sharing documentation between districts. In addition, suggestions were made to begin educational transition decision-making and re-enrollment in advance of the Education Transition Meeting.

Next, the Workgroup discussed district/charter participation in DSCYF meetings and how information is currently shared. The DSCYF Education Unit will be gaining access to the EdInsight dashboard, which will allow them to obtain and upload student-level information. Ferris School does not request students' cumulative file; rather, copies of documents are requested since students will return to school. For students with special education needs, the sending district shares the student's file. However, IEP information is not shared electronically between schools and DSCYF. The DSCYF Education Unit enters IEP information into IEP Plus.

Secretary Ranji reviewed challenges related to youth's educational re-entry that were identified at an internal DSCYF meeting. Challenges include:

- Documentation needed for re-enrollment and families navigating the process
- Timing of youth's transition
- Limited engagement between youth's district/charter and the youth and his or her family prior to the Education Transition Meeting
- Transition specialist being the only DSCYF staff person who attends both meetings
- Limited engagement of families (by phone at Treatment Team meetings or not attending EPT meetings)
- Community service providers are not currently invited to meetings

The Workgroup considered the best ways to engage districts/charters and community-based service providers in DSCYF meetings. There was agreement that districts/charters should continue to participate in the first EPT meeting (by phone) and be provided a list of all EPT meetings so that they may be dialed in to participate. Families will also be invited to participate by phone at the monthly EPT meetings. At the first EPT meeting the district or school point person can be identified and it will be confirmed what types of information would be most helpful to the district and how they prefer to receive that information. The Workgroup also recommended that 45 days prior to youth leaving YRS that there be a critical meeting for educational transition planning. Districts would be provided information in advance of the 45-day meeting and the student's portfolio would be shared. At this meeting a decision could be made on the student's educational placement and any additional information needed for decision-making or re-enrollment can be identified. Community-based providers could also be invited to this meeting (e.g. mental health, substance abuse) to help plan for continuity of services.

The Workgroup also discussed student enrollment and the funding mechanism for youth receiving educational services while in YRS care. DSCYF does not get student count funding for youth that are in their educational programs. When a district expels a student the student is typically dis-enrolled. A question was raised about whether there is certain funding that can follow a student regardless of their placement. It was also acknowledged that a student's expulsion might not be complete at the time when the youth is discharged from YRS. Students' length of expulsion time varies. Many expulsions are one year, however it is not required by statute that expulsions last 180 days. Expulsion decisions can be modified, though DOE regulation says that expulsions for firearms must be 180 days. Having a meeting 45 days prior to youth's release from YRS would allow time for districts to go back to their board to make a case for modifications to an expulsion.

3. Establishing Criteria for Determining Youth's Educational Placement After Secure Care

Secretary Ranji reviewed information from the cohort of youth in 2012 whose data was tracked as part of the Task Force final report. Data was shared on the 12 youth who returned from YRS secure care to an alternative placement. Most youth who go to an alternative school after YRS are not returning to their traditional school and are not graduating. A question was raised about whether it makes sense or not to have youth go through so many transitions (e.g. Ferris to cottages; alternative placement to traditional school).

Data was also provided on youth's last placement before entering YRS. About half of the 66 youth came from a traditional public school setting (non-alternative); 28 came from an alternative setting, and 5 youth's placement were not able to be identified based on the available data. The Workgroup discussed the significance of youth entering YRS from an alternative versus a traditional entry point. These factors might show what youth's success would be in particular school environments.

4. Next Steps

At the next MOU Workgroup meeting the group will discuss draft criteria for determining the educational pathway of youth when they leave YRS secure care. Follow up discussions will also take place on data and information sharing (e.g. IEPs) in EdInsight and other platforms, as well as documentation challenges with dis- and re-enrollment. Lastly, in advance of the meeting draft information will be shared about the 45-day meeting so that it can be discussed in greater detail.

Finally, a suggestion was made to reschedule the June 26th MOU Workgroup meeting. The Department will look at alternative options and confirm with the group.

5. Public Comment

No public comment.

6. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 10:30am.